Intellectual Origins of Irish Republicanisms: Ulster Presbyterians and Hutcheson on Political Judgement

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Eighteenth-century Irish republicanism which culminated in the United Irishmen has been traced back to some earlier intellectual movements than the direct influence of the American and French Revolutions in recent historical researches. McFarland (1994) underlines the ideological contacts between Scotland and Northern Ireland and names four factors of radicalism: (1) the importation of Covenanting tradition to Ulster; (2) the influence of the 'Real Whigs' in Dublin on the Scottish universities; (3) the 'New Light' Presbyterianism in Ulster inspired by the Scottish universities; and (4) Francis Hutcheson (pp. 6–18). Hutcheson may be a synthesis of the first three traditions, which may explain his popularity among the Scottish and Irish literati. Hutcheson is thus rightly regarded as among the intellectual origins of Irish republicanism, but in such recent studies he is mainly represented as a practical moralist advocating civic virtue. His theory of moral psychology has not been put in this context yet. We will examine why he took up the idea of a moral sense in the political context of Ulster Presbyterians in the 1720's. In our view their defence of their conscience in theological terms was developed and transformed by Hutcheson in his moral philosophy whose essence seems to have consisted in reconciliation of Protestant private conscience and ancient communitarianism. A moral faculty discovered in the human senses and passions provided every citizen with political judgement which enabled her/him

to approve the natural rights, including liberty of conscience, and participate in politics to secure them. This approval of natural equality both in a moral faculty and rights seems to distinguish Hutcheson's republicanism as remarkably modern. It is opposed not only to Presbyterian rejection of human nature but also to civic humanism's limitation of virtue to a few. He gave moral significance to individuals' happiness in everyday life, putting it before God and the community.

I Situations of Ulster Presbyterians in the early eighteenth century

Persistent prejudice derived from the history of the rebellions in the previous century kept rivalry and hostility between the established Anglican Church and Presbyterians in Ireland. With the establishment of the Presbyterian Church in Scotland in the Revolution, the Anglican authority in Ireland was apprehensive of the growing power of Ulster Presbyterians; the cohesive organization of the Presbyterian church government seemed more consolidated by the creation of the General Synod in 1690; and a wave of Scottish immigration was expanding Presbyterian population.

The Presbyterians enjoyed no statutory toleration until 1719; they could be persecuted for their worship. Besides they suffered many economic and social discriminations: with their precarious leases they had to pay high rents and tithes; the services by Presbyterian ministers in education, marriage and burial were denied. Anglican ascendency was reinforced by the Test Act of 1704 which barred dissenters from civil and military offices. The Presbyterians' persistent effort to repeal the act was not successful and the act remained effective, if not stringently applied, until 1780 (Hayton, 1997, pp. 52–54). Latimer (1893) observes that 'As a reward for their services, Presbyterians were

declared incapable of filling the most humble office under that Episcopal Government for which they preserved Derry to Ireland and Ireland to Great Britain' (p. 135). The Test Act had considerable effects on the Presbyterian political interests. According to Hayton (1997)'s close analysis, the test excluded them from the municipal governments in Belfast and Derry, thereby reducing their power of returning the Presbyterian candidates to the parliament, but they maintained their virtual representation through sympathetic Whig delegates, and in other cities the test did not affect their hold in corporations and parliamentary representation. The main cause for the decreasing number of dissenting members of the parliament is the decline of the dissenting landed interests who held closed boroughs and counties (pp. 60, 62, 66, 69, 71). The Toleration Act of 1719 meant that they were no longer persecuted for their religious life, but it did not improve their civil rights in substance. Their complaints about discrimination rather alienated churchmen who suspected their radicalism in religion and politics.

Besides this issue of the established church and state excluding Presbyterians, the 1720's presents another issue within the Ulster Presbyterian church. That is the subscription controversy. When the British government proposed the Irish Toleration Act of 1719, they required some test of orthodoxy before granting religious liberty and many Presbyterians thought that the Westminster Confession of Faith should be the creed to subscribe. The Synod had required the subscription to it by candidates for the ministry before. But, though none challenged openly the confession itself, disagreement occured about the lawfulness of imposing the subscription as a test of orthodoxy. Non-subscribers called 'New Light' criticized the subscription as infringement of their conscience.

Among them were James Kirkpatrick, John Abernethy, 'the true father of

the Freethinking School of Irish Presbyterians' (Witherow, 1879, p. 196) and Samuel Holiday. They were all graduates from Glasgow University, where John Simson, Professor of Divinity, promoted a progressive outlook of faith, encouraging free inquiry by observation and reason and in 1715 defended himself against the authority's charge of teaching heresy (Cameron, 1982, pp. 118f); he denied the Presbytery's right 'to require my [his] private thoughts on any point of divinity' as against 'the rules of the Gospel, Constitution of this Church, and the laws of the land, and the rights of every free subject' (Simson, 1727, pp. 13, 15). Stimulated by liberal intellectual climate at the university, the 'New Light' Presbyterians formed the Belfast Society in 1705 for free religious study and discussion. A non-subscribing minister, James Duchal, remarked in his *A Sermon on an Occasion of the Death of the Late Reverend Mr. John Abernethy* (Dublin, 1741, pp. 49–52): 'no man disputing for victory, but searching impartially into all that could be said on both sides of a question for finding the truth' (qtd. in Witherow, 1879, p. 164). Ministers of this society made another Presbytery in Antrim in 1725, which the Synod refused communion in 1726. The Presbytery declared in *Letter from the Presbytery of Antrim to the Congregation* (1726, pp. 6–10) that 'no Church, or set of uninspired men, whether met in Synods, Councils, or any other society, have any power from Christ to add any other terms of religious communion to those He hath settled in the Gospel' and that setting other terms was 'the setting up in the church an exorbitant and arbitrary power, contrary to the essential rights of natural equity, eversive of Christian discipline, a snare to conscience, destructive of the liberties of Christians, and the holding of an inquisition' (qtd. in Witherow, 1879, pp. 312f). The Synod had been trying to accommodate non-subscribers by concession, making the subscription voluntary not compulsory and allowing candidates for the ministry to state their faith in their own words.

But schism was not prevented.

We have so far outlined the two issues facing Ulster Presbyterians in the beginning of the eighteenth century. In view of a distinctly well-organized institution of Ulster Presbyterians the first issue between them and the Anglican state should not be interpreted as that of toleration of individual conscience but as that of political struggle for privileges between Presbyterian and Anglican communities (Beckett, 1948, pp. 14–17). The second issue of subscription within the Presbyterians seems more purely concerned with individual freedom. But in the languages non-subscribers used they mainly took both issues in the same perspective of toleration. Rather, we should suggest that the issues are in different dimensions in that the first issue of exclusion of Presbyterians is about the institutional framework of a state in juridical terms; while the second issue of subscription goes beyond such an external institution to examine humans' moral faculty and moral improvement. Non-subscribers challenged traditional Presbyterianism, taking a new rational and moderate approach to religion to adapt it to modern moral life. Arguments of some of them and Hutcheson are interesting in that they related these two dimensions of eighteenth-century politics. We will examine what Hutcheson was doing with his moral philosophy, putting him in the context of Ulster Presbyterianism. His theory of the moral sense and passions will be read as a theory of political judgement which would provide a moral foundation for dissenting politics in pursuit of liberty of conscience and civil rights.

II Non-subscribers on liberty of conscience

The subscription controversy can be traced to a new spirit of free inquiry into theology, which the church authority and the populace suspected as Arianism and required the test of orthodoxy. According to Westerkamp (1988)

the general character of the controversy is the challenge of the liberal progressives to the authoritative conservatives and such challenge focused on the opposition of moderate theology stressing reason and virtue to popular orthodoxy stressing piety and grace (pp. 101, 103). McBride (1993) also finds that non-subscribers' insistence on conscience and moral improvement made them receptive to the language of civic virtue propagated by Hutcheson from the Molesworth circle (pp. 80–84). This interpretation in terms of civic humanism, however, seems to be rather procrustean and underplay the distinctive contribution of 'New Light' Presbyterianism itself and the difference between it and Hutchesonian moral philosophy. The former did not share the latter's exaltation of a human moral faculty but had a sceptical view of it, which seems to have underlain their liberalism defiant of any human authority. Understanding these points will enable us to make clear how specifically Hutcheson tried to inherit and modify 'New Light' Presbyterianism.

Instead of imposing the civic humanist paradigm on them, we should first examine closely what the non-subscribers were saying in their own still religious terms. Ulster Presbyterians demanded the dissenters' civil rights against religious discrimination by the established Anglican Church. When non-subscribers opposed their private persuasion to their own church authority, they were aware of the connection of their liberty of conscience and the whole dissenters' cause of toleration. In logical sequence the dissenters' civil rights presuppose the liberty of non-subscribers' conscience. Then making conscience independent of authority will naturally lead to considering a human faculty of moral judgement; in this appreciation of a moral faculty non-subscribers and Hutcheson seem to differ. Furthermore non-subscribers' liberal theology and politics presupposed and was motivated by their moral orientation, which needs examining in order to understand where they should be located in the shift from

Augustinian Presbyterianism to polite moral philosophy.

So in this chapter we will take up three major non-subscribers and first examine their criticisms of institutions excluding them in pursuit of liberty of conscience, then proceed to their view of a moral faculty, and thirdly infer their moral orientation behind their liberal politics and theology. Here we owe the idea of moral orientation to Charles Taylor (1994), who elucidates modern internalization of moral sources by finding that deism replaced the hierarchical order of reason with the providential design of nature which enabled us to affirm our sentiments and ordinary life as morally significant (Part III). The 'New Light' Presbyterians can be put in this process of internalization. We will see specifically their distinctive moral vision of what humans should be in the divine government.

James Kirkpatrick (1731) opposed any church authority which imposed new religious laws, such as the Westminster Confession; a church's discipline, truth, peace and order may be maintained without the authority which seemed to him 'the bane of all peace and unity in the Christian church' (p. 83). A main reason for non-subscription is derived from the Protestant principle: the Bible is the rule and Christ is the law-giver. So non-subscribing Presbyterians can claim to their loyalty to the Protestant tradition. Moreover he thought non-subscription was connected with the cause of the whole dissenters against the Anglican confessionalist state. He observed that subscribers who supported the Synod's power to impose new laws could not deny the same power to the Anglican Church (p. 93).

His liberal confidence is based on his faith in 'the rights of conscience and private judgment' (p. 26). He explained that God gave each human the faculty of recognizing religious rules and comparing her/his actions with them. On this judgement he built individuals' self-government defiant of any authority, which

seems essential to republicanism. He observed that 'all Christians have a right to try the decisions of popes, prelates, councils and synod, presbyteries and all other assemblies, and to judge for themselves, whether they be true or false, right or wrong, and to cleave religiously to truth and duty, in opposition to them all' (p. 27).

So can we find moral sources fully subjectivised in him? We want to take up two issues to modify such a view. First it is still God positively as well as ultimately that enables individual judgement to reject any mediate authority and this poses problems. True, 'the word of God is the only rule' (p. 74), but how can one be sure that she/he is following it in judging for herself/himself? In fact Kirkpatrick used a sceptical argument about human judgement to say that 'creed-makers are fallible men': 'And if every set of rules have a power of imposing what appears to them to be true and agreeable to Scripture; it is impossible this power should not be abus'd, and turn'd in many instances against truth. All men are fond of their own opinions; they all seem to them, to be just and true; and, if they believe that the imposing of truth is doing real service to it, it will be unavoidable, in this state of imperfection, that error shou'd be impos'd, and worthy good men censur'd for not embracing it' (p. 77). So nobody can or should be so positively sure of her/his conscience as to impose it on others. This is paradoxically a reason for defending conscience against authority. Christian denunciation of a human natural faculty as opposed to the divine grace is the basis of the right of conscience. Scepticism of human judgement may partly cause non-subscribers' elitist dismissal of congregations who pretended to examine the faith of candidates for the ministery. Though their liberal religion seems to have affinity with republicanism, this negative view of human judgement does not suggest how one's conscience work on others' for political action instead of remaining within itself.

Secondly in Kirkpatrick's outlook private conscience did not monopolize moral resources. It was contained within the private field, separated from civil authority. This is a corollary from separation of religion and politics. He admitted that the public authority was the judge of the public good with no positive civil role for private judgement:

> The proper sphere, then, of civil authority do's not coincide nor interfere with the sphere of conscience. For conscience judges only of our actions as they are religious, or irreligious: And civil authority has nothing to do with them, under that consideration; and, therefore, enforces all its laws by the power of the sword, and by temporal rewards and punishments; which ought, by no means, to be used in the business of religion. (p. 36)

Conscience thus explicitly did not form independent political judgement; rather it was supposed to conform to the civil authority. But in fact the Irish state was far from civil enough because it was still a confessional state integrated with the Anglican Church, so no such separation was realized on the establishment side. In dissenters' strategy for winning full toleration, adopting this Lockean separation, which was a formal ideology of the revolution settlement, meant making dissenters innocuous enough to appeal to the establishment. When a High Church, William Tisdal, denounced Presbyterians as offspring of regicides and confusing the revolution and the rebellion, Kirkpatrick defended their allegiance to the crown and Whig constitutionalism in his historical work (1713): 'tho' they are religious dissenters, they are political conformists' (p. 451).

For all these difficulties, some words in his works seem suggestive of a general tendency of his moral orientation. He mentioned that, while laws and creeds by human authority were disruptive of church, the peace would be realized when the pure religion consisted of moral sentiments, emphasizing 'an

unity of heart and affection' and 'all the offices of humanity and charity' (pp. 85f.). So he looked at some virtuous and civilized society ahead of liberation of conscience. It is true that these remarks were not fully developed into a system and that in his outlook the divine order was not extended to human nature. But we can infer from his vision an appreciation of self as the moral standard, though derivative, and the significance of moral improvement of self. Moral realism is shown in his opposition to human voluntarism of subscribers who 'claim such an extravagant power to their judicatories, as by their sole authority to alter the very morality of actions, and by their command to make an action innocent, which antecedent to their command was sinful' (p. 45).

Abernethy (1733) demanded the repeal of the sacramental test by referring to the theory of the social contract: humans enter civil society for the purpose of securing liberty essential for their reasonable enjoyment and happiness, so any limitation of some subjects' liberty presupposes that their liberty is incompatible with 'the true original interests and liberty of the civil community' (p. 29). But this was not the case for the dissenters who acknowledged the civil constitution. The sacramental test was clearly an infringement of their civil liberty. He criticized the conformity enforced by laws as popish persecution contrary to the Whig revolutionary principle: 'every attempt towards such an extensive uniformity in religious modes and opinions, when attended with penalties' is 'a plain violation of the original contract, a branch of that tyranny which extends itself even to the soul' (p. 33).

It seems that for Abernethy the principle of the formation both of a church and of a state is personal commitment. He underlined this when he remarked that 'civil societies are, or ought to have been, voluntary associations' (p. 39). So the dissenting idea of religious conscience is also the foundation of their politics: conscience is constitutive of civil society. And in turn the social

contract and the resultant civil society are designed to overcome religious discrimination and defend their conscience by separating reasonable human needs as natural rights from religious consideration. The social contract is precedent to religion in that the end of civil government is 'the common safety and happiness of those, who are united under it, considered only as rational and social creatures in this world' (p. 94). We might say that the social contract theory provided an effective procedure for the dissenters to get out of the confessional state and envisage a secular state in which the natural needs of humans, regardless of their denominations, would be provided for.

The repeal of the test would naturally promote the dissenters' interests, but at the same time Abernethy also put it into a wider perspective of 'the British and Protestant interest in Ireland' (p. 59). He tried to appeal to the establishment by remarking that the repeal was thus necessary from the strategic viewpoint of the Protestant establishment, though the authority knew well that the Presbyterians would be ready to ally with the Anglicans against the Catholics even without such a concession (Beckett, 1948, p. 18).

That such a general union should survive schismatic sectarianism was Abernethy's policy when he joined the subscription controversy. So he (1722) supported the Synod's conciliatory policy to the non-subscribers. The Synod allowed intrants either to subscribe or explain their confession in their own words to be accepted as ministers by congregations. Abernethy tried to shift the point by reminding that what mattered was 'not the question between the subscribers and non-subscribers, but this whether notwithstanding that difference a perfect union ought to remain among the Presbyterians in the north' (p. 53). His argument may have been persuasive to some degree because, as he said, the internal union was a base of their reputation as a great part of 'the Protestant and British interest of this kingdom' (p. 3). Here we should

notice that this specific strategy was still a far cry from the later United Irishmen with its pro-Catholic and Irish nationalist orientation.

Apart from such a specific difference, however, Abernethy suggested how different sects should promote general union among them, which would be relevant to the United Irishmen's programme. He emphasized subscribers' and non-subscribers' agreement in a few basic Christian doctrines which his true religion consisted of, and he relegated their controversy about subscription to that only in expediency. For him the agreement in the first point was compatible with the disagreement in the second point. A subscription to a man-made confession of faith should not be regarded as the essential condition for church membership; such prescription would disrupt the union. His guiding principle was 'no human power ought to make anything necessary to Christians, as a term of communion which Christ has not made necessary' (p. 46). With this principle the union would be compatible with differing judgements.

In ecclesiastical and civil politics we have seen Abernethy's radical idea of personal commitment, which surely shows internalization of moral sources. When moral sources are put in individual conscience, it will become morally significant to study and improve a moral faculty of judgement. For Abernethy (1720) it was natural that 'religious obedience is founded on personal persuasion' (p. 222). Human authority in church and government cannot bind conscience which is subject only to the authority of God. This freedom must be absolute because 'how is it possible that one man should determine for another, how far this judgement shall extend, and to what instances? To limit and prescribe to it, is, in effect, to deny it altogether' (p. 241). It is also conscience that sets a contract between magistrates and subjects. Thus conscience or personal persuasion plays key roles, and Abernethy identified it with 'the common sense of mankind' (p. 248) and opposed it to authority. But, as he

mentioned, judgement is not free from problems of prejudice, interests and passions, and a vain unguided imagination. He gave procedural advice to ensure the right use of judgement: he stressed evidence, attentive reasoning, and deliberation (224). This move to empirical moral philosophy in his argument on conscience is interesting, yet it is not fully developed. His account of conscience was rather focused on its relations with God in theological terms and he did not develop empirical argument by examining how judgement works in actual human psychology in society. Despite conscience's key roles, his internalization of moral sources was not completed; independent authority was located in conscience but its substantial justness was not explained internally with principles of human mind. He had to rely on the ontology of 'the invariable reason and nature of things' (p. 223) to justify conscience.

Though lacking an empirical analysis for proving a human moral faculty, Abernethy's stress on personal persuasion makes clear the moral orientation of his religion. Instead of contrasting the divine grace with helpless human nature, his religion implies human moral possibility of reason and virtue. In fact he remarked that the true design of Christianity was 'to improve the human nature in moral goodness, to reclaim men from their corrupt dispositions and vicious habits, and make them as like God in all his imitable perfections as it is possible for such creatures to be' (1735, p. 260). We may reasonably find the influence of Hutchesonian moral philosophy in this clear statement which was made in 1735 after Hutcheson's main works were published.

Samuel Haliday (1724) explained his reason for non-subscription: 'my scruples are, concerning the lawfulness of submitting to human tests of divine truths, especially in a great number of extraessential points, when imposed as necessary terms of Christian, or ministerial communion' (p. 1). Christ was the sole authority for him and the church authority should not add any test for

communion which Christ did not prescribe. Conformity was opposed to variety of individual opinions each of which should be tolerated in benevolent spirit because it was beyond mortals to reach the truth and agree anonimously; 'an exact agreement of opinions, if men are sincere in their searches after truth, can never take place' (p. 53). Liberty of conscience is thus based on his understanding of the perennial imperfection of human understanding; sincerity, not truth, is what humans are obliged to aim at. Here moral sources are extremely subjectivized into each personal persuasion. In contrast to the divine will, each particular human will is moral good to which one should commit oneself. We may regard it as the basic pattern of his moral vision that multiplicity of particular goods is opposed to uniformity of the good of the whole system.

In spite of civil society's right to impose its laws made by the majority of representatives, Haliday argued that in matters of conscience representation and majority rule did not work (p. 101). So like the above two theologians he combined political conformity with religious dissent. This moderate argument for minority's toleration was applicable to both non-subscribers and dissenters in general. Limiting his radical liberty of conscience to the religious sphere, he apparently tried to convince the establishment of the dissenters' loyalty to the constitution. Schismatic controversy should not impede conciliatory union in his Protestant strategy. When the toleration act of 1719 permitted the dissenting institutions and worship, he argued, 'the British and Protestant interest in this kingdom' (p. 151) had priority over the internal tension. While 'New Light' theologians were disputatious, we can find in them polite, not zealous, values enabling them to take an extensive perspective of civil as well as religious goods.

Haliday was sceptical of human understanding reaching the absolute truth.

The subscription controversy may be interpreted as focusing on the problem of partial opinions. In non-subscribers' view human laws by church authority which is never free from partial passions and interests make the problem worse. Human tests lead to 'superstition, idolatry and spiritual tyranny' (p. 111) and confusing errors. Furthermore the imposition of unity causes secessions because humans are fallible, 'proud, passionate, selfish, fond of their own opinions and impatient of contradiction' (p. 114). So the possible solution would be that each conscience should judge according to the divine laws. Haliday contrasted the humanity and the divinity in search for the universal moral standard above partiality of opinion. He knew that 'publick authorized human standards of orthodoxy' (p. 109) were affected by partiality. So Christ's revelation recorded in the Scripture is 'the only proper test and standard of orthodoxy' which the unlearned as well as the learned can understand for their salvation (p. 110). Thus 'the native purity and simplicity of the Christian religion' (p. 112) was the way out of the confusing world of partial opinions. In non-subscribers' argument moral sources were surely moved into each conscience, yet conscience depended directly on God for its moral standard, and some transcendental appeal to God was indispensable; human nature was not morally autonomous. Any independent moral faculty in human psychology was not demonstrated nor was any articulate vision of moral improvement shown within civil society.

III Hutcheson on the moral sense and the natural rights

How can our undrestanding of the problem situations of Ulster Presbyterians help to interpret Hutcheson's moral philosophy? There are two contradictory interpretations of his philosophy now. Moore (1991) distinguishes his two incompatible systems; in early years in Dublin he expounded moral

realism as a serious technical pursuit but later in Glasgow University he lectured natural jurisprudence as a conventional subject for young students. Haakonssen (1991) tries to synthesize his moral realism and natural jurisprudence. In our limited study we only consider his philosophy as far as it is related to contemporary Ulster Presbyterianism. With its situations for a context of his philosophy, we may find a reason why he took up both the moral sense and the natural law and suggest an account of how the two systems were connected in his practical intention.

Returning from Glasgow to Ireland in 1718 Hutcheson was surprised at 'New Light' zeal and found their zeal rather misdirected:

> I find by the conversation I have had with some ministers and comrades, that there is a perfect Hoadly mania among our younger ministers in the north; and what is really ridiculous, it does not serve them to be of his principles, but the pulpits are ringing with them, as if their hearers were all absolute princes going to impose tests and confessions in their several territories, and not a set of people entirely excluded from the smallest hand in the government anywhere, and utterly incapable of bearing any other part in persecution but as sufferers. I have reason, however, to apprehend that the antipathy to confessions is upon some other grounds than a new spirit of charity. (qtd. in Reid, 1867, III, 115f)

The reference to Hoadly connects non-subscribers' defence of private conscience with Anglican latitudinarian attack on church authority. This letter suggests Hutcheson's detached opinion that rather than in a sectarian interest non-subscribers should be more interested in actual sufferings of the Presbyterian community as a whole excluded by the Anglican establishment. But they surely shared the intellectual and moral approach to religion. In fact it is said that his sermon exalting virtue and moral improvement astounded some

naive orthodox congregation in Ulster. A parishioner said to his father:

> Your silly son, Frank, has fashed a' the congregation with his idle cackle, for he has been babbling' this 'our about a good and benevolent God and that the souls of the heathen themselves will gang tae heaven if they follow the licht o' their aen consciences. Not a word does the daft boy ken, spur, nor say about the gude auld comfortable doctrine of election, reprobation, original sin, and faith. (qtd. in Westerkamp, 1988, p. 103)

Thus both Hutcheson and non-subscribers were promoting a new liberal theology. But we notice a clear difference between them in the fact that, while the latter mainly remained in theology, the former developed moral philosophy from a theological basis. The limitations which we have identified in the non-subscribers' theology will help to understand what made Hutcheson proceed to the morals. When non-subscribers defended their conscience against the church authority to impose a new creed, they failed to justify a human moral faculty because of their belief in the depravity of human nature. So they had recourse to the divine will for the moral standard. The divine will and decrees were absolute for them and in this sense they adhered to moral voluntarism. Though their praise of conscience points to moral internalization, the deity, to which conscience was subject, held moral sources. Hutcheson's natural theology and moral psychology broke through this limitation to moral internalization to a greater degree. He developed Shaftesburian deism which internalized 'a teleological ethic of nature' into moral sentiments (Taylor, 1994, p. 255). Assuming natural sociability he extended the providential moral order into human nature, that is, the senses and passions so that moral sources were subjectivized into sentiments. The purpose of his moral philosophy was to find 'natural connexion or order' in the 'multiplicity of natural desires' (1747, p. 39). All passions, including selfish, were linked to the public good within the divine

harmony, as he remarked: 'how admirably our affections are contrived for good in the whole....by them each particular agent is made, in a great measure, subsurvient to the good of the whole. Mankind are thus insensibly link'd together, and make one great system, by an invisible union' (1728, pp. 177f).

Hutcheson discovered the moral sense on the assumption of the divine order in human nature. This epistemology of virtue was owed to Shaftesbury and the ancient moral philosophy, but in the context of Ulster Presbyterianism his theory of the moral sense just provided the human moral faculty in which the non-subscribers' defence of conscience was deficient. Against Augustinism underlying both traditional Presbyterianism and Hobbesian and Pufendorfian natural jurisprudence he illustrated the moral sense and furthermore classified passions into the public as well as the selfish to prove natural benevolence. His seemingly facile optimism did not prevent him from noticing the possible partiality of the moral sense. With dissenting background he knew well that many human disasters, such as religious persecutions, were due to 'a sense of virtue upon false opinions, and mistaken benevolence' and 'wrong or partial views of publick good' (1725, p. 189). Then Hutcheson introduced the distinction of 'particular passions' and 'general calm desires' which allows reason to consider the effects and circumstances of actions and suspend them (1728, pp. 29f). Reason overcomes 'partial view of publick good' to apprehend 'extensive impartial schemes of publick happiness' (1728, p. 97). Through discipline and education natural affection can be improved into the universal impartial benevolence. With this moral judgement established in individuals we have reached an important point of internalization of the moral standard.

But the role of Hutcheson's moral epistemology was not just to provide internal justification of conscience with judgement of the general good. His appreciation of the moral sense and natural affection seems to offer a new

vindication of the moral significance of particular goods which the moral sense approves and which tend to be sacrificed for the universal standard by God with the absolute authority. Non-subscribers had God-centred values in that they regarded as imperfectness the variety of human individualities which must be subjected to the universality of God. So Hutcheson's recognition of the moral significance of particular, even if partial, affections and actions may be a transformation of values. He reduced the love of God to an additional motive to virtue, remarking that 'when a person therefore not thinking at present of the deity, or of a community or system, does a beneficient action from particular love, he evidences goodness of temper' (1728, p. 327). His following explicit statement makes it clear that God was becoming morally less relevant:

> however we must look upon that temper as exceedingly imperfect, inconsistent, and partial, in which gratitude toward the universal benefactor, admiration and love of the supreme original beauty, perfection and goodness, are not the strongest and most prevalent affections; yet particular actions may be innocent, nay virtuous. (1728, p. 333)

Compared with that of non-subscribers Hutcheson's moral vision does not seem to consist in rising up to some transcendental divine order but in private everyday life with particular affections for family and friends as well as in moral improvement to the perfect civic virtue. While the former is accessible only to intellectual elites, the latter is open to common people. Hutcheson's moral sense is conducing to the natural equality of humans as it makes morals possible to everyone. He was dissatisfied with Augustinian theology underlying natural jurisprudence for this reason:

> If to make a mind virtuous; or even innocent, it be necessary that it should have such sublime speculations of God,... then God has placed the bulk of mankind in an absolute incapacity of virtue, and inclined them perpetually

to infinite evil, by their very instincts and natural affections. (1728, p. 331)

Hutcheson's moral vindication of the human passions led to rehabilitation of bodily desires which had been despised in contrast with spirit in Christianity. Hence 'the affirmation of ordinary life' (Taylor, 1994, p. 211) with its centre in economic improvement rather than in the salvation by the divine grace. Such life is based on the system of natural laws and rights, which Hutcheson claimed to deduce from the moral sense and which it seems to have been the primary purpose of government to defend in his politics of the popular consent. Let us see how his moral epistemology brought his theory of natural rights and laws, and then how his moral epistemology secured the people's political judgement for their political participation to defend the rights. In short, unlike the non-subscribing Presbyterians, his moral sense theory enabled him to develop his theology into moral philosophy, in a wider sense, with a perspective of modern society.

It is clear that even in his early ethical works Hutcheson intended his moral sense theory to be relevant to natural jurisprudence and politics. He wanted his discovery of the moral sense and natural sociability to reduce the absolutist implication of Augustinian self-love theory underlying Pufendorfian natural jurisprudence. The providential order demands, observed Hutcheson, that the opposition between grace and nature and that of the natural law and human nature should be dissolved:

> ...as if each person were in his whole frame only a separate system from his fellows, so that there was nothing in his constitution leading him to a publick interest, further than he apprehended it subservient to his own private interest; ... the wisdom and goodness of the author of our nature is traduced, as if he had given us the strongest dispositions toward what he had in his laws prohibited; and directed us, by the frame of our nature, to

> the meanest and most contemptible pursuits; as if what all good men have represented as the excellence of our nature, were a force or constraint put upon it by art or authority. (1728, pp. 67f.)

So in the subjectivization of the natural law by the moral sense Hutcheson wanted to make humans moral agents who would respect natural laws. He simply claimed to deduce natural rights from the moral sense, stating that 'by our natural sense of right and wrong, and our sympathy with others, we immediately approve any persons procuring to himself or his friends any advantages which are not hurtful to others, without any thought either about a law or the general interest of all' (1747, p. 120). Particular private goods are thus approved by the moral sense as natural rights prior to the general good. This must be an essential contribution to modern liberalism, considering the fact that the concept of the general good tended to be used to justify absolutism.

But, as we have seen in his ethics, the moral sense and sympathy are not free from partiality so they may fail to perceive the general good of the whole system and put particular goods into perspective when natural rights must be justified in relation to the general good. For example important and reasonable needs of some people distant from us may not be admitted as natural rights because needs of others near us preoccupy our moral sense. We have seen that Hutcheson introduced the concept of 'the general calm desires' to allow reason to judge in terms of the general good. These 'general calm desires' seem to be a second psychological basis for the natural rights because they prove consistent with a detached rational judgement of the general good. Here Hutcheson somehow put the natural rights on sentiments, yet he was not quite consistent in his subjectivization of the natural laws when he introduced reason for the general perspective. Such perspective required civic discipline which was rather elitist; so not quite consistent with his intention of making virtue open to all.

With such difficulties Hutcheson set the natural rights on the basis of moral faculties of the moral sense and reason. This is the subjective approach to natural rights in terms of epistemology. But Hutcheson seems to have another approach in terms of the external moral order. If reason is not available, the divine harmonious order may ensure that such subjective needs as the moral sense approves will be admitted as natural rights consistent with the general good. In this sense the natural theology provided the ontological framework of the whole system in which to consider natural rights. But he tired to prove even God's right to moral government by applying his method of the moral sense and reason. His right is approved because of His justice, 'universal impartial benevolence' to his whole creatures (1725, p. 272). Hutcheson is a moral realist, thinking that the public good, not the divine will, makes us obliged to His natural laws.

In Hutcheson's account each individual with moral judgement is herself/ himself a founder, so jealous of, the natural rights and laws. This legal framework had a moral vision; not some transcendental one, but of everyday life. Private happiness and economic improvement had important places in such a vision. So it was to the purpose that he explicated laws on family, contracts, and property in his moral philosophy to prepare students for their future business and civic life. He defended private property as the indispensable institution for encouraging industry when most humans were usually motivated far less by 'the general affection to his kind' than by 'the narrower affections' and 'the selfish ones', criticizing utopian visions like Plato's and More's communism as destructive of liberty and impracticable because the right distribution by magistrates could not be trusted. His natural theology underlay his opposition to the utopian community when he remarked about Plato that 'it seems too arrogant in that fine genius to attempt an overturning the manifest

constitution of the Creator, and to root out what is so deeply fixed in the human soul; vainly presuming to contrive something better than the God of nature has ordered' (1755, I, 320–324). In this criticism Hutcheson is appealing to the Protestant gap between God and humans which set a limit to what politics is able to do; unlike God philosopher kings should not make humans and society by their blueprint as if in arts.

IV Hutcheson on politics of popular consent and eschatology

While the divine will and the polis provided the absolute moral standard for non-subscribing Presbyterians and ancient citizens respectively, Hutcheson internalized the moral standard in each moral sense's approval so that he no longer assumed the moral stability: for all his apparent exaltation of the moral sense and civic virtue, he realized moral limitation inevitably attached to subjectivization: 'it is so hard to judge of the moral goodness of others, and men are so frequently led by prejudice and party-zeal into the most unfavourable opinions of the best of men' (1755, II, 17). Though we find two opposing ancient and modern views coexisting in his text on justice (1755, I, 260f) and liberty (1755, II, 282), that is, one aimed for the noble virtue; and the other for the defence of rights from power, we should interpret that the latter is viable and appropriate to his moral subjectivism. His remarks on modern liberty runs: 'In our modern plans of laws, where little regard is had to the education and discipline of the subjects, their natural liberty is little confined in any sense; and a people is denominated free, when their important interests are well secured against any rapacious or capricious wills of those in power' (1755, II, 282).

His vision of modern polity may seem to minimize politics. In fact his friend of similar intellectual background and tendency, James Arbuckle, as an

editor of the *Dublin Journal,* stated that he would avoid any political topics because it was not time to examine 'the principles of Leviathan, or an Oceana' and denied that 'everybody should be made acquainted with the foundations and original of government' if he is to serve the public. He was an Addisonian journalist stressing the reform of manners (No. 1). Though Hutcheson also acknowledged 'courtesy and good-manners' as 'the natural dress of virtue, the indications of those affections which are truly honourable and lovely' (1755, II, 112), he had no intention whatever to reduce the importance of politics in his moral philosophy. Rather we will suggest that his moral sense theory provided the people with political judgement necessary for their participation in politics.

The subjectivization of moral sources means that everyone can judge his natural rights by his moral sense. The moral sense seems to be a moral foundation of the people's political activity, enabling every citizen to judge whether the government fulfils its purpose of preserving his rights. For all his admiration of ancient civic virtue, his moral theory centred on epistemology implies that the legitimation of political power no longer consisted in the superior virtue of the legislators but in the consent of the people. As Hutcheson often tends to be interpreted as a civic humanist, this modification needs stressing. Virtue is now examined from the spectatorial perspective of whether the people approves or disapprove of it. This spectatorial view probably had much to do with Hutcheson's moral vision of human happiness derived from ordinary private life. Government is constructed primarily to secure such happiness and politics is concerned mainly with restriction of the abuse of power.

Hutcheson's outlook of limited politics is related with limitation of a human moral faculty. Here he was true to the Presbyterian traditional scepticism of a human moral faculty which we saw in non-subscribers. If we were

absolutely sure of someone's virtue, he would have a perfect right to dispose of our rights. But, as it is,

> there is no acknowledg'd standard, or judge of superior wisdom or benevolence, which every one would be too apt to claim... And as each man is more nearly engag'd for his own good by self-love, than another is by mere benevolence, he will scarcely be brought to believe, that another understands his interest, or pursues it, better than he could himself. And what happiness can remain to the govern'd, while there is any suspicion of either the benevolence or wisdom of the governor? Especially when there are too great presumptions, that governors may be sway'd by self-love against the publick good. (1725, p. 271)

Thus Hutcheson's moral sense theory leads to scepticism of political power; his insistence on natural benevolence never supports credulity. And follows the conclusion:

> From this consideration, as well as the natural love of liberty, and inclination both to act and judge for our selves, we justly conclude, 'that except when men, for their own interest, or out of publick love, have by consent subjected their actions, or their goods within certain limits to the pleasure of others; no mortal can have a right from his superior wisdom, or goodness, or any other quality, to give laws to others without their consent, express or tacit; or to dispose of the fruits of their labours, or of any other right whatsoever. (1725, pp. 271f)

The foundation of political power is not some presumption of virtue or moral excellence in a ruler but popular consent. It may be said that Hutcheson's moral epistemology introduced the common people's viewpoint by examining how affections and activities are approved or disapproved and defined humans' judgement and its limitation. The moral faculty makes it possible for the people

to be independent agents whose consent only legitimates political power. And the limitation of the faculty will make it necessary for the people to be always jealous of their rights against the abuse of power because they can never be sure of magistrates' probity which they might expect in Plato's Republic. So we think that his moral sense theory provides a moral basis for his social contract theory including the right of resistance.

Hutcheson's stress on the people's consent in contrast to virtue or moral excellence in politics reminds us of the spiritual importance which he attached to the natural rights and liberty. His argument is clearly motivated by Protestant moral orientation to internalization. Noticeably he found 'the right of natural liberty' suggested not only by self-interest but 'by our moral sense, which represents our own voluntary actions as the grand dignity and perfection of our nature' (1755, I, 295). The right of private judgement is the most morally significant of natural rights. He especially remarks, 'As to opinions about the deity, religion, and virtue, this right is further confirmed by all the noblest desires of the soul' (1755, I, 295f). Private sincerity was morally uppermost for him, so he demanded toleration and refuted any imposition of even the true religion. Though he encouraged the state to inspire virtue and religion in the people, he limited its action only to rational persuasion (1747, p. 318; 1755, II, 310f), and he was optimistic that free speech would result in the moral and intellectual improvement:

> It has always been found, where there have been no restraints upon men about such tenets, in free states, and where there has been a general toleration of them with good nature; free conversation and argument have gradually abated the bigotry and hot zeal of weak men about such points, and made more just sentiments of religion generally prevail. (1755, II, 313)

The contrast of the divine and the human governments based respectively

on moral excellence and popular consent shows that Hutcheson shared dualism with Presbyterian theologians. He was surely a Christian moralist; that his ethics could not do without God is shown by the fact that he excluded atheism from toleration as 'denial of a moral providence, or of the obligation of the moral or social virtues' (1755, II, 313). His critique of atheism makes clear that he considered religion in terms of its effect on social morality and politics. But on the other hand he had an ultimate religious vision in which the worldly values had relatively smaller significance. Throughout 'An enquiry into the supreme happiness of mankind' (1755, vol. I, bk. I, pt. II), he held a hierarchical order of several kinds of pleasures; his comparison of their quantity assumed their qualitative distinctions which reflected his God-centred moral orientation. In short, the highest pleasure is the pleasure of piety; second, of social virtue; third, of beauty perceived by the internal sense; last, of body perceived by the external senses.

In his moral philosophy God was almost replaced by his providential order, that is, nature, so his aspiration to God did not bring a transcendental vision but was integrated with his moral vision of ordinary life and ensured harmony of self and public interests. His vision of ordinary life, however, was to be superseded by his eschatological vision, which we find in the concluding pages of his posthumous work, *A System of Moral Philosophy.* He predicted the end of human history and the divine eternity. His general outlook of history consisted in the progress of corruption and institutional adjustment to it; a sort of combination of civic humanism and social contract theory. Men moved from the state of nature to civil society when 'simplicity of manners' gave way to corruption and made 'civil polity' as opposed to 'tyranny' preferable to 'anarchy' (1755, II, 219). The countermeasure to corruption was not virtue or the return to the first principle of the ancient constitution but the elaboration of

the constitutions which would prevent the evils from abusing political power (1755,II, 252). Increasing 'luxury and corruption' were matched by the accumulation of 'wisdom and experience' necessary for perfection of 'civil polity'. With this progressive outlook he refuted the ancient constitution as the irrelevant return to barbarity and recommended modern mixed constitution:

> The argument of antiquity would recommend to us to return again to dens, and caves, and beasts skins, and acorns, or wild fruits of the earth, instead of our present houses, food and cloathing. A rude artless plan might succeed well in earlier days while more of the earlier simplicity and innocence of manners was preserved. But, when luxury and corrption of manners crept in, men would soon find the necessity of more artful polities. (1755, II, 258f)

Then he explained Harringtonian institutions such as the agrarian law, the popular assembly and the senate and the rotation of offices.

Hutcheson's history was understood in terms of not the cycle of constitutions but the linear progress. Within the institution went the progress of ordinary life which corresponded to the providential order. He assumed that the stable continuity of everyday life reflected the divine progress, so he was critical of historiography's tendency to neglect such continuity and underline political crises :

> While histories relate wars, seditions, massacres, and the corruptions and intrigues of courts, they are silent about those vastly superior numbers who in safe obscurity, are virtuously or innocently employed in the natural business and enjoyments of mankind....The social joyful innocent employments of the bulk of mankind are no subjects of history; nor even the ordinary regular administration of a state in the protection of a people and the execution of justice. (1755, I, 196)

This changing emphasis in history seems to be parallelled with the transformation of Hutcheson's moral vision we have seen. His apparent exaltation of civic virtue belies his modern 'affirmation of ordinary life'. As Strauss (1966, p. 83) notices, aristocratic virtue of honour was supported by history which recorded glorious actions in wars and politics. A break with such aristocratic morality is what Strauss finds in Hobbes, and Locke also replaced humanists' history glorifying martial virtue with education stressing compassion and preservation (Tully, 1988, p. 70). Hutcheson followed these English philosophers breaking with aristocratic virtue disdainful of life.

Hutcheson's natural theology was incorporated into his moral vision of civil life; the divine contrivance ensured that enlightened calm self-interests would be compatible with public interests and that moral sentiments would recommend virtue as internal happiness. The irreversible progress of corruption, however, was doomed to lead us beyond this secular framework of providence. We find Hutcheson's eschatology in the conclusion of his moral philosophy rather baffling because it apparently makes what he pleaded for virtue meaningless in the long run. He stressed 'the instable condition of terrestrial affairs' and remarked that 'states themselves have within them the seeds of death and destruction': opposition of interests and passions, 'the weakness and inconstancy of human virtue' and 'luxury and present pleasures' (1755, II, 377f). What humans and states attempted was significant only to an extent limited by this future eternal vision. It is not until the divine judgement that the providential order would be fulfilled and virtue would be rewarded with restful happiness. So it can be said that his system of moral philosophy, consisting of natural theology, ethics, jurisprudence and politics, was ultimately subjected to this vision of grace. Dualism of his moral philosophy and eschatology was derived from Augustinian dualism of nature and grace in the Presbyterian

tradition. Allan (1993) notices among Scottish historians since the reformation 'their national propensity for the grimly apocalyptic interpretation of history' (p. 31). But the fact that Hutcheson devoted only a few pages to eschatology in his voluminous book shows clearly how far his concern deviated from that tradition.

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